

## What does a Reggio Emilia-inspired pre-school offer?

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### How do you view children?

As a Reggio inspired preschool, we attempt to make reference in our work to the values and principles of the Reggio Emilia Educational Project.

**Loris Malaguzzi**, founder of the Municipal preschools in Reggio Emilia, invited educators to re-consider the way they thought about children (and therefore the way that adults interact with children).

Malaguzzi asked us to look at the ‘strengths’ that children bring with them to the learning process, rather than the more traditional perspective of what children ‘cannot’ as yet do and are often still learning to do. When we ‘see’ children as **strong** and **competent learners, full of potential**, equipped from birth with many of the **learning strategies** they will need throughout their lifetime....we change the way we interact with our learners. For example, instead of thinking....this child is only small and will need a lot of help and assistance (a deficit model)...we instead think – let’s see what this learner already knows, so that we can tailor our support. We call this a **strengths based approach** to teaching.

### What makes you unique?

Based on our shared **image of child**, we see children as the holders of **rights** (this is supported by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Young Child). We reflect this in our teaching, by paying attention to what children say and do, as one of the informants of our curriculum design.

We believe that children are ‘experts’ in their own lives. We therefore support our learners to listen to each other, because we believe that when we share our own ideas and listen to other’s perspectives, that together we grow stronger ideas. As such, we support the development of **learning communities** and **democratic classrooms** where rights (and responsibilities) are carefully considered.

We **make our learning and teaching visible** to children, parents and educators. We share observations of children engaged in their work (i.e. written observations, the photographs we take of children as they interact, children's comments and conversations) via **documentation panels**.

Our school environment always raises comment from visitors, who notice the **calmness**, the **visibility of children** (their art work and the documentation, as well as our choice of background colours as neutral – so that children and their work are the focus) and the sheer joy in learning that our children demonstrate.

### What is the teacher's role in the classroom?

At EtonHouse Shanghai, we see **teachers as researchers**. Our teachers are **observing, recording and analysing** aspects of children's learning in an ongoing way. They walk beside children in their learning – not 'telling children' what and how to think, but supporting children to be independent thinkers and innovators.



As such, our teachers become **guides and mentors** to children. They pose problems and use **questioning** as a teaching strategy to promote thinking and wondering.

We believe it is our role to **empower** children to see themselves explorers and discoverers of their own knowledge and understandings.

Our teachers must be very **intentional** in their teaching – they are responsible for setting the scene for learning to take place by being very **purposeful** in the selection of resources, learning experiences and teaching strategies to meet children's needs and interests.

### How do you view children in the 21st Century?

Children today need skills to not only read print, but also to communicate via e-print. These tasks require different processing skills. Children need to develop creative thinking and independent research skills – to be able to find out what to do 'when they do not know what to do' – not to rely on someone else knowing.

We believe children have a responsibility to accept a role in ensuring a **sustainable future**, so we work thoughtfully with children to talk about recycling and waste minimisation; to establish relationships and appreciation of the natural world.

Sustainability also refers to the interpersonal world. As children and families travel for both leisure and work commitments children are exposed to many diverse cultures, foods, traditions and so on. We therefore believe we have a responsibility to develop in children an **understanding of and respect for cultural (and individual) diversity** and an appreciation of their place in the world (their own culture and traditions).